

WXDU offers DJs for private parties

By LANE HENSLEY

After months of equipment failure, incompetence of some former staff administrators and chronic theft problems, the University's student radio station, WXDU, has bounced back and morale is higher than ever, according to music director Bryce Burkhart.

Imaginative planning and policy changes are geared toward improving inside attitudes and outside reputation. In the coming year, WXDU will program live bands at the Coffee House and on the quad. Production manager Sarah Reichman said the station hopes to offer more tickets for local shows and more record give-aways. The station also plans to have, in coordination with Major Speakers and concert promoters, more live interviews with visiting artists.

Album theft, a problem which hurts programming more than accounting, has nosedived following a change in station policy which formerly prohibited taping of albums by station staff.

The station will expand its service of providing disc jockeys for private parties beginning Sept. 5 with a "welcome back" party in Von Canon Hall. Last year the station provided disc jockeys for six private parties. The station now owns its own portable sound system.

"We're actively recruiting within fraternities and other living groups to make people more aware of WXDU," Burkhart said. "The \$300 we charge for a party is considerably less than other disc jockeys, and certainly less than a band."

Each disc jockey is required to play 18 cuts each show from a weekly playlist. The list rotations and the airtimes are then reported to journals such as *New Music Report* and *Rock Pool*, which sponsors a new music seminar in New York.

Since WXDU first went on the air in 1983, listeners have complained of poor reception. The 1000-watt transmitter is located in Hillsboro, about 10 miles northwest of Durham, and its distance and location can, at times, make

WXDU from page 4

current staff members attribute to bad maintenance on the part of past student engineers. "There are a lot of things a student engineer just can't handle," said program director Mark Woodlief.

"It's impossible for a student engineer to carry a full course load and give the station all the necessary time," Burkhart said. Against the wishes of some Radio Board members who maintained that station maintenance should and could be handled by students, WXDU recently hired Jim Davis, a consulting engineer for WDNC and WFXC ("Foxy-107") to supervise the engineering. "This is the first time in three years we've been able to operate consistently at full power," Burkhart said.

Burkhart said funding for the station is more than adequate. "ASDU has been particularly generous with us," he said. "The only problem is the bureaucracy involved in spending it. We have a \$30,000 budget, and with the exception of major equipment purchases, we have to buy everything ourselves with our own money, then apply for reimbursement from Student Activities."

Purchases of such necessities as office supplies and new albums, therefore, depend upon the personal assets of staff members. "Basically, we have no petty cash system,"

WXDU plans to be more visible and audible this year.

the station easier to receive in Chapel Hill than at Duke. "The layout of the University works against us," Burkhart said. "For example, there's a huge metal wall over in New Dorms. It's hard to broadcast through that."

The poor placement and low power of the transmitter are the result of WXDU's "new kid on the block" status, Burkhart said. "The FCC tells us where we can put our transmitter and how much power we can use. The rule is, we can't interfere with other signals [at the same frequency.] WSHA at Shaw University broadcasts at 88.5 megahertz, and we broadcast at 88.7 megahertz. In fact, when we're off the air, you can hear them clearly. Their transmitter is near Raleigh, and the two are pretty much aimed right at each other."

Burkhart said. "And the recompensation process is very tedious and slow. It once took about three weeks to get paid for some album purchases, and they told us it was our fault for not following up, which is strange, since we had always received notes when there were problems before."

The station purchases about 200 albums per month in addition to the ones they receive free from major American labels. Usually, the station only has to purchase new import releases. Foreign labels do not have the operating capital to service American college radio stations.

Burkhart said the station, until very recently, had committed "flagrant violation of some important FCC regulations," including broadcasting below the minimum power designated and failure to participate in the Emergency Broadcast System. Both problems were recently corrected.

"If an FCC agent came into the studio and asked you how EBS worked and you didn't know, not only would the station be in serious trouble, but he could fine you personally on the spot," special programs director Mike Woodard told disc jockeys in a recent XDU meeting. In the event of a natural disaster or other emergency, WXDU would receive instructions for emergency broadcasting from WQDR, the regional EBS coordinator.

If Shaw University, which is currently facing serious financial difficulty, goes under, WSHA's license would either be surrendered or Shaw could retain it under an FCC-approved plan, Burkhart said. If they were to lose it, WXDU could consider increasing its power.

But such a move would mean replacing the current state-of-the-art prototype QEI transmitter, for tens of thousands of dollars, Burkhart said. "Right now, we're about the only station in the area that doesn't have a backup transmitter. Even WXYC [the UNC-Chapel Hill radio station] has a backup."

The transmitter has suffered other technical problems as well. Several components burned out entirely, which

See WXDU on page 11